Listing of Claims:

Claim 1-2 (Cancelled)

Claim 3. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing a pivot assembly, comprising the steps of:

mating a ball bearing at each end of a shaft;

disposing a sleeve on an inner ring, between an outer circumference of the ball bearing and one end of the shaft;

fixing a seal member to cover an outer end face of the ball bearing; imparting a pre-load pressure to the inner ring by <u>applying pressure</u> on the seal member; and fixing the seal member to an outer circumference of the shaft.

Claim 4. (Original) The method according to claim 3, further comprising the steps of:

forming a sharp edge on an edge part of the seal member;

causing the sharp edge to stick closely at a point to one of the outer circumference of the shaft and the inner circumference of the sleeve; and

fixing the sharp edge at the point.

Claim 5. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 3, further comprising the step of: forming the seal member by press blanking; and

fixing by a welding means an edge part of the surface of the seal member that faces the press blanking to one of an outer circumference of the shaft and an inner circumference of the sleeve.

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing a pivot assembly, comprising the steps of:

mating a ball bearing at each end of a shaft;

disposing a spacer between an outer ring of the ball bearing and one end of the shaft; fixing a seal member to cover an outer end face of the ball bearing;

imparting a pre-load pressure to the inner ring by <u>applying</u> pressure on the seal member; and fixing the seal member to an outer circumference of the shaft.

Claim 7. (Original) The method according to claim 6, further comprising the steps of:
forming a sharp edge on an edge part of the seal member;
causing the sharp edge to stick closely at a point to one of the outer circumference of the shaft and the inner circumference of the sleeve; and

fixing the sharp edge at the point.

Claim 8. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of: forming the seal member by press blanking; and

fixing by a welding means an edge part of the surface of the seal member that faces the press blanking to one of an outer circumference of the shaft and an inner circumference of the sleeve.

Claim 9. (New) An apparatus for preload application to a hard disk drive pivot assembly including a shaft, a first ball bearing having a first inner ring and a first outer ring and located on a first end of the shaft, a second ball bearing having a second inner ring and a second outer ring and located on a second end of the shaft, a sleeve enclosing the first ball bearing and the second ball bearing, and a seal member covering an outer end face of the first ball bearing, said apparatus comprising: a support means supporting the pivot assembly;

a pressing member applying the preload to at least one of the first inner ring and the first outer ring of the first ball bearing by pressing on the seal member; and

a welding means laser welding the seal member to one of an outer surface of the shaft and an inner surface of the sleeve while the pressing member applies the preload.

Claim 10 (New) The apparatus for preload application in accordance with Claim 9, wherein the pressing member further comprises a plurality of grooves formed parallel to an axis of the pressing member, distributed circumferentially along a surface of the pressing member and extending to a surface of the seal member, and wherein the welding means conveys a laser beam through at least one of the plurality of grooves to the surface of the seal member.